

ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS

Field Schools in BC for Summer 2006

British Columbia's colleges and universities, will be offering more than half a dozen archaeology field schools this summer, a couple in association with First Nations. Some field schools already start work during the first week of May, and a few will be in operation until the end of August. Thus, with projects spread throughout the province and beyond, 2006 will be a busy season for the next generation of archaeologists.

In the vicinity of Vancouver, Capilano College will be returning for another season in the Seymour River Valley where Robert Muckle and his students will be surveying and excavating early 20th century sites. Meanwhile, Katzie First Nation and Langara College were offering a field school in the Maple Ridge area, however, that has recently been canceled.

On the coast, Huu-ay-aht First Nation has teamed up with the University of Victoria to offer a field school in conjunction with Denis St. Claire and Alan McMillan's Huu7ii Archaeological Project. Nicole Smith will lead the UVic team to excavate at Huu7ii on Diana Island, near Bamfield on the west coast of Vancouver Island. This is a major village site with a 5,000-year-long occupation history, and this season will see exploration of the spatial context of a prominent household.

In the north, Andrew Martindale and students of the University of British Columbia will investigate in the Dundas Island Group near Prince Rupert, where David Archer and Northwest Community College had toiled last season. This year, the ongoing research project with Archer and the Allied Tsimshian Tribes will focus on regional settlement patterns.

The University of Northern British Columbia's field school will be taught by

Farid Rahemtulla. At the editorial deadline, the details were still in negotiation.

Simon Fraser University will be digging in the Interior. Their focus will be on Keatley Creek in the Upper Fraser Valley, where Robert Muir hopes to conduct an independent assessment of the exciting, recent claims for secret society use of peripheral areas at the site (see Jesse Morin's article in the last issue of *The Midden*). Excavations will focus on controversial house-pit 109 and nearby cultural depressions.

Finally, SFU, through its international program, will be fielding a second field school in Fiji. After classes at SFU and at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, David Burley will take this lucky group to excavate at Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park.

RC

New Nazca Geoglyph

Japanese researchers have discovered a new figure in the geoglyph complex popularly known as the Nazca Lines, on the south coast of Peru. These lines are ascribed to the Nazca culture, ca. 50 BCE to 600 CE, and have been preserved over the centuries thanks to the dry environment of the Atacama Desert. The new geoglyph is a 65-m long representation of a horned animal, a form without precedence; however, it is similar to designs occurring on contemporaneous pottery. Masato Sakai (Yamagata University) says that the figure has been overlooked up until now because of its large size and remoteness. However, it could not evade detection on a satellite photo [source: www.spiegel.de].

RC

Recent Research on the Lower Columbia River

Portland State University's Wapato Valley Archaeology Project (WVAP) continues to examine the late precontact / early contact archaeology of the sedentary foragers of the Lower Columbia River Region (and the Wapato Valley, near Portland, Oregon). Among the various analyses currently underway (orchestrated by KM Ames of Portland State University (PSU); see Ames, Sobel, and Trieu 2006, as well as Smith in press), I'm focusing on two projects. First, I'm working with Jon Daehnke (UC Berkeley PhD student) on reconstructing land-use patterns around and between the known village sites, partially by a large augering program, and partially by estimating travel-times and travel-distances, on foot and on water. I'm also integrating the WVAP results with those of a recent National Park Service (NPS) excavation at Station Camp (45CL4), an early-historic site near the Columbia River Mouth, on the North Shore of Washington, roughly across from Astoria, Oregon. Several excavation seasons at Station Camp (led by Dr. Doug Wilson, NPS and PSU) have revealed the remains of several plank structures very different from most Lower-Columbia villages; preliminary results will be published in the fall of 2006.

Cameron M. Smith

Ames, K.M., Sobel, and A. Trieu.

2006. *Household Archaeology on the Northwest Coast*. International Monographs in Prehistory, Archaeological Series 16. Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Smith, C.M. in press. *Prehistoric Social Organization of Labour Among Sedentary Foragers of the Southern Northwest Coast*. British Archaeological Reports, International Series.

Archaeology at UBC

Rumour has it that there are changes afoot at UBC that are expected to affect archaeologists there in a very positive way. After long, long consideration (15 years or so), it seems that the Department of Anthropology and Sociology has finally decided to take heed of recommendations and divide into two separate departments. It is expected the change will soon receive the agreement of the University and that this summer the two departments will come into existence. Archaeology will remain within Anthropology as one of the "four pillars" of the discipline. Although it is also expected both departments will continue to share the building next to the Museum of Anthropology, the separation will provide a stronger identity and more internal funding opportunities to both departments. All of this will benefit archaeology faculty and student researchers.

PO

US Almost Offers Apology for Damage to Babylon

When the US and its coalition invaded Iraq, it set up one of its camps on the ancient site of Babylon. They dug trenches into the site, filled sandbags with site soils and artifacts, and built a helicopter landing pad within the site (as described in *Midden* 36 (3/4), 2004). The repeated landing of helicopters on the pads also caused sandblasting of the palace of Nebuchadnezzar and affected other structures. As the head of Iraqi Board for the Heritage of Antiquities told ABC News, "Normally in Iraq when a farmer would scrape two metres off an archaeological site he will be sent to court." Colonel John Coleman, a former chief of staff for the Marines in Iraq, in response to these complaints and the possibility of an apology, told the *Belfast Telegraph*, "If it makes him feel good, we can certainly give him one." He also argued that if the military didn't occupy the site, it would have been looted as heavily as other sites throughout the country in unprotected areas. Indeed, there have been many reports about how such pillaged artifacts are sold on the black market to fund the insurgency.

BA

Intriguing Riddle at Angkor

A massive spillway at Angkor (a Khmer kingdom of the 9th to 15th centuries A.D.) has presented an intriguing riddle. Possibly constructed to divert floodwaters, archaeologists are puzzled as to why it may have been deliberately destroyed. Ronald Fletcher, archaeologist at the University of Sydney, Australia and co-director of the Greater Angkor Project (GAP), provided information to Richard Stone (*Science*, vol. 311, March 10, 2006) that indicates the spillway may provide information about causes of the collapse of Angkor. Archaeologists have long discussed potential causes including a rigid political and economic infrastructure, environmental degradation, and abrupt changes in monsoons. Although firm conclusions cannot be made this early in the research, the data suggest, in the words of GAP member Charles Higham, University of Otago in New Zealand, that "the lesson to be learned from all this is don't abuse the environment."

The research has proven that large reservoirs were constructed at the site around the end of the 9th century A.D. to divert the course of the Siem Reap River and to store water for irrigation and possibly to prevent flooding of houses and fields. But why the spillways might have been deliberately destroyed and how this event may relate to the collapse of Angkor remains puzzling. The GAP project, in testing all potential causes of the collapse, has found clues pointing to problems with the waterworks. Poorly engineered and unable to irrigate more land than would support half of the population, GAP archaeologists suggest the waterworks were a strategy for water management to prevent flooding during bad monsoon years. As the city sprawled over the valley and the waterworks grew more complex, the waterworks appear to have collapsed.

Climate change may have tipped the fragile balance that existed between the constructed waterworks and the environment. The GAP team is collecting data on monsoon records for the period of the Little Ice Age (1300 to 1600 A.D.) when cooling in the Northern Hemisphere weakened monsoons in mainland Southeast Asia and triggered sharp decreases in crop

yields in Europe. The hypothesis of the GAP team is that the Angkor area became drier.

The GAP team is aware of parallels between the collapse of Angkor and the Maya cities. Although the civilizations were separated in time, it is possible that overpopulation, environmental degradation and warfare created a downward spiral that all the engineering skills of the society could not overcome. The GAP team message to our contemporary world is that it could happen again.

PO

Vancouver Maritime Museum Director to Leave

The Vancouver Maritime Museum has announced that well-known underwater archaeologist, James Delgado is leaving the Museum on June 30th to become the Executive Director of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA), a non-profit institute with headquarters at Texas A&M University and at Bodrum, Turkey. After 15 years as Executive Director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum Society and of the Museum, Delgado is excited about his future with INA, an organization dedicated to charting the history of human interaction with the sea. In his new position, Delgado will continue to live in British Columbia but will travel extensively to raise public awareness and generate new projects and funding for INA.

As for the Vancouver Maritime Museum, Delgado has vowed that, within the limits of his new position, he will continue to assist the Maritime Museum, which, he says, has a bright future. Hector Williams, Secretary of the Board and Chair of the Collections Committee at the Museum — and with 16 years on board, the longest serving trustee — has assured *The Midden* that, until a new Executive Director is recruited, the Museum is in good hands. Williams, another well-known archaeologist (at UBC) and a specialist on Greek antiquity, reports that staff will be "very busy accessioning and cataloguing the very rich Chung Collection of artifacts and documents" that relate to CP Steamships and the maritime world at large.

PO